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Confirming The Long-Expected

The long-expected has finally been confirmed: Allen W. Dulles is retiring as head of the Central Intelligence Agency and will soon be replaced.

This change has probably been delayed by the Cuban fiasco, which intensified rumors that it would take place. For it to have been made at any time near that unfortunate event or the report to the President by the special investigating committee would have pointed the accusing finger at Mr. Dulles in so rigid a way that nothing that could be said could have diverted it. In fact, even now, the Cuban invasion failure and Mr. Dulles' retirement will be linked in many minds.

Mr. Dulles, a courtly, dignified figure, stoutly maintained that the information provided by the CIA concerning the invasion of Cuba was accurate and was correctly interpreted. President Kennedy publicly demonstrated his confidence by naming Mr. Dulles to the special committee investigating the invasion and its failure. But public confidence in the CIA was shaken; that agency has a formidable handicap to overcome in public opinion.

Indications are that Mr. Dulles has intended retiring for some time, from before the abortive Cuban invasion. President Kennedy asked him to remain as director of the CIA, as he asked J. Edgar Hoover to continue as head of the FBI, to demonstrate the non-partisan character of these important agencies. Reportedly the plan was for Mr. Dulles to continue in charge of the CIA until the Kennedy administration had become settled in office and then to resign. Since the CIA was so intimately involved in the Cuban invasion, its failure would make any changes in its top echelon appear punitive. Consequently any plans Mr. Dulles had then to retire had to be delayed.

At any rate the persistent talk that Mr. Dulles is to retire from the CIA—he is 68—has been confirmed. The nature of much of CIA work is such that its director's effectiveness in the job cannot be properly appraised. There have been some blunders, such as the U2 incident in May, 1960, and the Cuban invasion. But the CIA must, in the eight years Allen Dulles has been its head, have carried on some projects which have served the nation well and have contributed much to its defense and security.